THE
NATION

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— A Special Issue —

ECONOMIC HAZARDS OF ARMS REDUCTION

What We Must Pay for a Normal Economy in a Stable World

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LETTERS

The Mark Who Was Twain

Dear Sirs: To Kenneth Rexroth, reviewing Mark Twain's autobiography ["Humor in a Tough Age," March 7], the humorist was completely normal. No schizophrenia whatever. No feeling "awful guilty about something awful." Personally, I've always felt that Mark Twain's decision to dress completely in white from head to foot... was equivalent to "coming clean."

Was it really so normal for Mark Twain to be a pilot on those floating brothels of the Mississippi, and then a miner in the rough West, and then a journalist in the gay and uninhibited Bohemia of San Francisco, and still remain a virgin until he was thirty and got married? Of course he may not have been a virgin. I only know what I read, and that there was never the slightest whisper of a woman in his life until his marriage.

And that marriage! Is it normal for a thirty-year-old man to fall desperately in love with a portrait in miniature, as Mark Twain did when he first saw Livy's portrait in Smyrna, Asia Minor, some 6,000 miles away from that girl's residence? And then, how normal was the story of that girl, which he heard at the same time, a girl who was a millionaire's daughter, and who had just spent two years on her back, paralyzed, and beyond the help of all physicians, until a faith healer entered her room one day and said: "Rise!" Whereupon she rose and walked.

And this pure youth falls in love with this dollar-princess who has obviously been under the spell of a wicked sorcerer. Mark Twain himself was addicted to these ancient forms. Didn't he write two volumes on the virgin Joan of Arc? (Explaining that once in his youth a bit of paper torn from a book had been blown by the wind into his face, and that he read it and it was about Joan of Arc, for whom he henceforth conceived a passion — perhaps anticipating the miniature that would also by chance come into his life.)

It's all quite normal. He writes a piece of erotica or two, to show where he stands; but at the same time, when his daughter goes to college and by chance he discovers that they use a book there that stands up for the poet Shelley (who abandoned his wife, Harriet), he goes into an awful rampage about morals and the desecration of innocent girlhood, and writes a thing called "In Defense of Harriet Shelley," and it's a scorcher for anyone who would step a single inch outside the path of absolute virginity and immaculate conception. But some years later, with the daughter dead, and his wife dead, Mark Twain greets Elinor Glyn as the greatest writer on earth, come to bring to male and female a new freedom.

No schizophrenia there. This is the poor printer's devil who dreams of becoming the first billionaire in the world through his fostering the invention of a machine that would eliminate printer's devils. And as the extremely affluent husband of a millionaire's daughter, this poor Southern boy writes a tale of a changeling, *The Prince and the Pauper*. And he writes the story of a poor man with a million-pound note.

No guilty feelings there. But why did he lie about his experiences in the Confederate Army? He did desert. And though he never joined the Northern cause, he was later able to identify himself so completely with the Grand Army of the Republic as to join their reunions, introduce General Grant as the speaker, and publish Grant's *Memoirs*. And write a book about a poor Southern boy who helps a Negro escape from slavery. And then send Negro boys through college. And with no guilt feelings whatsoever, he nevertheless worries about the death of his brother, feeling himself to blame, and the death of his son, again feeling himself to blame, and is so insensitive about these matters that he never forgets a childhood prank of his that cost a little boy his power of speech, and a half-century later writes a book about that: *The Mysterious Stranger*. Guilt feelings? Balderdash....

Mark Twain tells us that his autobiography was intended to be in a great many volumes. And terribly true. But what we have is a few fragments, and of no great importance. That's my reading of the case. Why, what happened, is guesswork. But there's some mystery here, that's for sure. Perhaps a trivial one. But working powerfully in Mark Twain, the twain, the split man.

GUY ENDORE

Los Angeles, Calif.

Dear Sirs: Mr. Rexroth, referring to Mark Twain, writes ". . . and it gave him entrance to the American home, back in the days before Mom had emasculated that institution." As a psychologist who has done considerable research in the field, I do not accept that Mom has emasculated the home: (1) Women have not emasculated men — this is a Madison Avenue distortion of Freud's concept of penis envy, and man's feeble excuse for not examining himself and his responsibilities; (2) women, even though they numerically outnumber men, are a minority group . . . the whipping girls for any unsolvable problem; (3) American family life requires deep study and not smug, off-the-top-of-the-head derision.

ANNE STEINMANN

New York City

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NEW YORK, SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 1959
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THE NATION

ECONOMIC HAZARDS of ARMS REDUCTION

EDITOR'S NOTE: When we planned our politics-for-peace issue — "If We Want Peace," February 21 — there was omitted from its purview the politico-economic impact of our own defense program and the role it plays among the many factors contributing to international tension. The omission was deliberate on our part, for we felt that this complex subject is in many ways the core of the problem, and as such deserved separate treatment.

The following pages, then, are to be taken as complementary to our earlier issue. They have been prepared under the general guidance of Paul M. Baran of the Economics Department of Stanford University, who enlisted the cooperation of two of his Stanford colleagues and of Paul A. Sweezy, co-editor of the *Monthly Review*.

Some readers who share *The Nation's* concern with peace will be disturbed by the harsh and unequivocal nature of the writers' conclusions. Our own reaction is quite different, and is based on the truism that realization of the magnitude of any problem is the first requisite to its solution.

The Choice Before Us . . *by Paul A. Baran*

ACCORDING TO official statistics, the unemployed in January numbered 4.7 million. Trade-union economists consider six million to be a more accurate estimate. This is the highest total for January since 1940. It is important to realize that the extent of this unemployment is *not* a reflection of a cyclical trough in the economy. It represents rather the accompaniment of a pronounced recovery from the sharp decline of output in 1957-58. As the First National City Bank's *Monthly Letter* for February observes:

> . . . Overall manufacturing output has regained more than 80 per cent of the ground lost during the recession, but only one fourth of the decline in the number of factory workers has been recovered. While longer work weeks and better utilization of labor have played their part in the marked rise in output per worker, the major influence has been improved efficiency of operations, including the installation of new facilities and the shutdown of the least efficient units to reduce costs.

In other words, even a complete return to the pre-recession boom levels of output of 1956-57 would lead only to an inconsiderable increase in employment. Yet productivity is rising, and is bound to go up further as a result of the massive investments and the sweeping technological advances that characterized most of the postwar period. If earlier average rates of expansion of output per worker serve as a guide, this year's industrial output can be produced next year with 3 per cent less labor. This would mean an additional million people out of work. But meanwhile the population grows; considering the prevailing rate of increase and the evolving age-distribution, approximately 1.3 million new job seekers will enter the labor market every year in the near future. Thus if output were to remain constant, unemployment can be expected to swell by more than two million per year.

Putting the problem in different terms: for something resembling full employment to be maintained, output will have to *grow* at the rate of approximately 5 per cent per annum. In the light of the historical experience of advanced capitalist countries, this is a tall order. The editors of *U.S. News and World Report* have every reason to wonder: "Is big unemployment here to stay?" (February 20 issue.)

It must be borne in mind that what we are considering here is *not*

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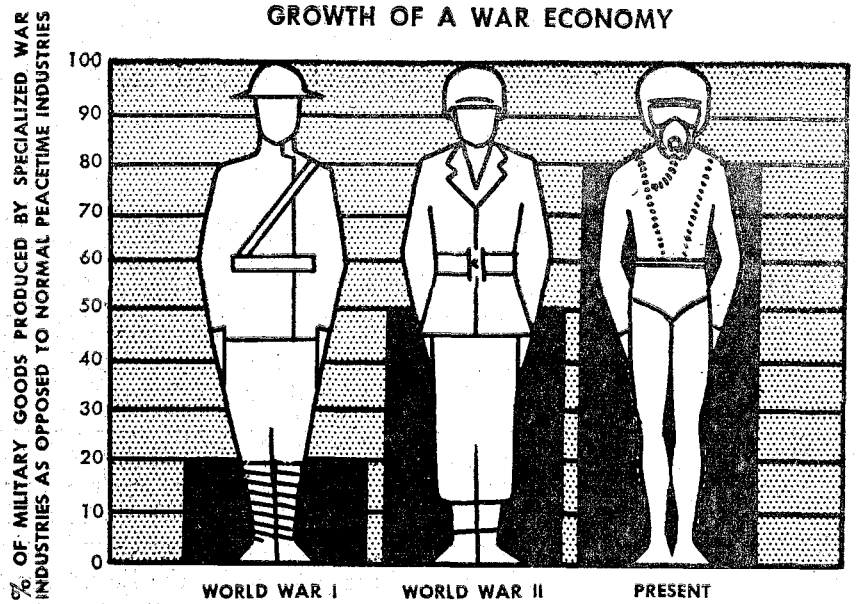
what would be a consequence of massive disarmament, or even of a partial reduction of military spending. Indeed, the threat of chronic large-scale unemployment, of "creeping stagnation," faces us in spite of the fact that nearly $50 billion are spent annually for military purposes, in spite of the fact that, all things considered, $100 billion worth of effective demand—a quarter of our entire Gross National Product—is based upon military outlays (as shown in Professor Tarshis' article on page 267). What would happen to the economy if the military pillar were to disappear is not easy to visualize. Federal taxes, undoubtedly, could be reduced, but not even the most optimistic economic analyst would expect the resulting increase in private spending to exceed or even to equal the decline in government purchases. Actually, confronted with a disappearance or a major curtailment of the armaments market, business may even reduce its investment appropriations—regardless of federal taxation policies. One should not forget what happened to business investment in the early thirties, when the tax collector could hardly have been accused of standing in the way of business expansion. That not too much should be expected from the tax-reduction remedy is apparent from Dr. Goldberger's paper (see page 271), even if its conclusions are somewhat more sanguine than would seem to me to be warranted.

But why rely on tax reductions? Could not public spending on welfare fill the gap? Considering the question in purely abstract terms, one obviously must answer in the affirmative. In fact, the Friends Committee on National Legislation has presented, in its recently published *Questions on Disarmament and Your Job*, a sensible program that could be substituted for the present armaments race. The committee proposes the following expenditures in the course of the next ten years: $20 billion on aid to world development; $25 billion on public health, hospital buildings and medical research; $25 billion on natural resources, roads, waterways and recreation areas; $20 billion on old-age benefits, child welfare and other social security; $30 billion on adequate school buildings, better teachers' salaries, scholarships and research; $30 billion on new housing projects, slum clearance, area and urban renewal; $20 billion on a civilian research program for the space age, and $30 billion on tax reductions so that "individuals may enjoy better private living, more leisure and artistic expression." One need not agree with this particular breakdown to acknowledge that some such program of resource allocation would not only be feasible, but also incomparably more conducive than military expenditures to the security, health and development of this nation and of the world at large.



Adapted from General Electric Defense Quarterly

IT MAY BE objected that we are trying to force an open door, that the preferability of welfare expenditures to military spending is undisputed, and that the former would be in the center of our national policy were not the latter imposed upon us by the exigencies of the international situation. Both of those objections are highly questionable. Dr. Sweezy's essay (page 275) discusses the economic and social forces which stand squarely in the way of a welfare-oriented governmental policy. His analysis is reinforced by the consideration that the producers of military "hardware"—the manufacturers of airplanes, missiles, electronic equipment, etc.—represent now, perhaps for the first time in American history, a powerful, articulate bloc of vested interests whose survival is predicated upon the continuation of the armaments program. The "countervailing power" of those who speak for reason, sanity, education, health, urban renewal and aid to poverty-stricken nations is alas! no match for the modern "merchants of death" and to their witting and unwitting allies. There is very little reason to assume that in the absence of international tension, public welfare would be the guiding beacon of our "power elite."

Worse still—and this brings us to the second consideration—much is to be said for the proposition that both a genuine relaxation of international tensions and a genuine disarmament program are bitterly opposed by those whose interests are best served by the continuation of the armaments race. Those who insist on our current attitude toward China, those who are perpetually ready to bring us to the brink of war in the Near East or in Germany, are neither architects of peace nor protagonists of peaceful coexistence. Peter F. Drucker has put his finger on the nub of the matter: "In international affairs . . . it is quite possible that it is defense technology which is causing the basic international tension rather than that the tension is responsible for our defense efforts." Indeed, it is sheer hyprocrisy to insist on the settlement of international disputes as a precondition

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for disarmament. There can be neither peace nor even a fruitful search for peace as long as rattling with H-bombs and A-bombs is considered to be the best means of diplomacy.

Genuine disarmament would undoubtedly have a highly unsettling effect on the American economy. This fact must not be obscured, but faced honestly. But to avoid unemployment by means of an armaments race represents the height of social madness. Unemployment can be and must be avoided by providing meaningful outlets to our economic and social energies, by planning for a rational utilization of our vast national resources. America's program of peace and prosperity depends crucially on the elimination from power of those whose vital interests are inexorably bound up with preparation for war. The nationalization of the armaments industry and the development of an imaginative, long-term plan of economic reconstruction are the basic prerequisites for the growth of a free, democratic society. They will not be attained until they become the battle cry of millions of American workers, American farmers, American liberals in all walks of life.

The Arithmetic of Defense Spending . . *by Lorie Tarshis*

THERE CAN BE no question about the overriding importance of our defense program, though there is a sharp conflict of opinion as to whether it is important for good or for evil. To many it represents the price we have to pay for survival; to others it seems a major contribution to the world's demise. These are terrible and paramount issues; and they are mentioned here not because we are going to discuss them, but rather because we are not.

Our task, if less important, is at least simpler: to consider the economic effects of the defense program, and these alone. Whether the program is too small or too big, effectively organized or not, adequately responsive to the military requirements of the next war or of the last —these are questions beyond my competence. Nor can I do more than guess the answer to the question of whether our best defense is indeed *military* defense. Instead, I am going to limit myself to considering the effects of the defense program upon our economy, and no more.

More than 60 per cent of the federal budget is presently earmarked for missiles, H-bombs and other devices to secure our ramparts. And with an Administration that feels it must have in its pocket a dollar of tax yield to finance each dollar of expenditure, no matter what the circumstances, we can just about feel these pennies for the Pentagon being squeezed out of us. It hurts, and so it is scarcely surprising that so many ask, "Can we afford it?" But just about as many voices—and oddly enough they are often the same ones—dolefully declare, "If it were not for our defense program, we'd be facing economic collapse."

Between the "Do we need it for prosperity?" and the "Can we possibly afford it?" which surely represent viewpoints at very nearly the extremes, the truth probably lies. In the following notes, I intend to set out some of the background facts which may help the reader to determine just where it lies.

How large is the defense program?

This is partly a matter of definition. Depending upon what we think it sensible to include, we might answer, "About $40 billion a year, or $60 billion a year—or even more." Clearly, any of these figures is large in absolute terms: say, for the smaller one, a line of pennies stretching about 45,000,000 miles into space, or more than fifty trips to the moon and back. Here, at least, is one lunar probe by the Pentagon upon which we can count with complete confidence.

The figure of a little more than $40 billion annually comprises the so-called direct defense expenditures: procurement of aircraft, missiles, military research and development, and ships; expenditures for the Atomic Energy Commission; military pay and allowances, and so on. The $60-billion estimate includes pensions for veterans, foreign aid and interest on the federal debt (the bulk of which was contracted in World War II). Still further additions could certainly be made; for instance, the amount spent to cover the expenditures of private business firms to finance their expansion to meet prospective military orders—an elusive figure, but appropriate. Clearly, some allowance to reflect a part of the cost of adding to the productive capacity of the electronics, aluminum, steel, petroleum, chemicals and many other industries, might be included.

Absolute figures of this kind—say $40 billion, or $60 billion, or maybe $80 billion—even though impressive are not really meaningful. They must be set against something to which they can be sensibly related, something more relevant than the distance to the moon. A usual method is to set them against the size of the entire federal budget (though for a number of reasons, this is not at all a good basis for comparison). The $40-billion figure, for what it is worth, now constitutes about 60 per cent of federal government expenditures; the $60 billion comes to 80 per cent (the equivalent figure for the fiscal year 1946 reached 86.5 per cent).

About all one can say for such a comparison is that since Congress and the Administration apparently regard the expenditure total, as set out in the budget, as the sum available for all their various programs, we can get a picture of the place of the military program in their system of priorities. But nothing else can be said for such a comparison because:

1. The budget figure for expenditures includes some entries that are not expenditures at all, as any half-trained bookkeeper would know if he were to scrutinize government accounting procedures. Transfers to the Social Security Account are a prime example. It also omits some items that should be included. In short, in

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this case the denominator is not very meaningful.

2. Nor, for that matter, is the numerator. The figure for defense spending (and, by the same token, for the total of federal government expenditures) includes some items the purchase of which constitutes no drain at all upon the economy's capacity to meet our wants, while others—and they are in the majority—impose a real, solid demand upon the productive machine. This can be illustrated by comparing, say, expenditures on pensions for veterans with those to finance the purchase of aircraft. The former consists in sending a check through the mail for which no current service is rendered in return, and in connection with which, therefore, no labor or machinery must be diverted from other uses. The latter, in contrast, requires the use of all kinds of resources, labor and machines; and clearly the more of these that are used for aircraft production, the fewer remain available for producing to meet other needs. Under some circumstances, it makes sense to express our problem as one of "aircraft or butter," but never as one of "pensions or butter." Be that as it may, the importance of comparing one sum of quite dissimilar subtotals to another sum of dissimilar subtotals is not likely to be helpful, even if our arithmetic can be carried out to several decimal points.

THESE remarks should set the stage for the entry of a far more useful comparison: the proportion of the total product of the whole economy that is directed to national defense and security. On this basis, national defense in the third quarter of 1958 absorbed about 10.1 per cent of our total output; national security (which includes foreign military aid) about 10.7 per cent. (These figures do not make any allowance for that part of our total output that was taken by private business firms to expand their productive capacity to meet defense requirements.) Thus from each dollar's worth of the nation's output, a bit more than ten cents' worth is taken by the Pentagon or the AEC.

One final note on the size of the program. In 1953 (when the defense program was somewhat larger, at $52 billion), about $23.5 billion of our total output was in the form of automobiles and things needed for their operation; $1 billion was spent on higher education, $11.9 billion on recreation and $77.2 billion on food.

Can we afford our defense program?

This question—usually answered so vigorously and firmly—is in fact a very complicated one. It requires an assessment of costs and benefits, and in this particular instance, such an assessment raises difficulties.

The economic *cost* of any "program"—defense, automobile production, education, or what you will—cannot be higher than the value of what must be given up to secure its realization. If the economy doesn't function properly, it can easily be lower.

When something like $40 billion of our national output is taken by the Pentagon, the cost to society is the amount of other things that we would have been able to enjoy had we not undertaken the production of missiles and aircraft.

Can we afford that cost? In a society like ours—affluent beyond all others, though hardly yet deserving of Mr. Galbraith's title—the question actually has little meaning. What do we give up? Longer tail fins? Larger refrigerators? More vitamins added to foods which, in their processing, have been stripped of vitamins? Softer mattresses? If that were all, and if more missiles spelled greater security, we could clearly afford them. And even though there are more urgent needs—raising the living standards of a large proportion of our population, better education and better housing—the answer might still be in the affirmative; surely shorter tail fins, smaller refrigerators and even some poverty could be endured if the price were survival. Though, as a society, we cannot afford everything, presumably we can afford all that is very important to us.

This answer is, however, too simple. Sometimes—today, for example—producing more guns does not require a reduced production of butter. There is a margin of unemployed resources upon which society can draw for its needs. When this situation rules, we cannot even measure the cost of the defense program by the value of what has to be given up in its behalf. In such circumstances, the cost is literally zero—and clearly an economy *can* afford something that has no cost.

The reader may find this puzzling, and feel tempted to brand the economics as topsy-turvy. So it is, but the fault lies not with the analysis so much as with the world it attempts to understand.

Can we afford a defense program of the present size? Even if there were no unemployment, this is like asking: Can a millionaire afford a three-dimensional Hi-Fi color television set with neon lights on the antenna, four electric windshield wipers and power steering on the controls? When unemployment prevails, you merely have to add in the information that the equipment described above is free. In short, it is silly to claim that we cannot afford $40 billion a year for defense.

Does our defense program sustain prosperity?

Here we shift our focus and instead of considering the cost of the program, we look at it as the basis for a very large and attractive market. From this standpoint, our first impulse is to answer in the affirmative. Especially now, when the aggregate market is not quite large enough to absorb as much as our economy could produce if it were operating at capacity, one cannot overlook the importance of a $40-$45 billion market. Indeed, in answering this kind of question, we have to take account of a very considerable supplement to the market: the added purchases of those whose incomes are derived from their participation in the defense program. After all, a Boeing worker will spend more when employed on a B-52 contract than if he were out of work; and the same goes for Boeing's stockholders. Taking all this into account, the total market (when defense spending is $40 billion) is roughly $100 billion larger than it would have been without the program.

But here we have to be careful. If there were no defense program, there might well be some offsetting factor that would restore at least a part of the market. Think, for example, of the very probable tax cuts,

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and what this might mean for the market. The size of the effect would depend upon the kind of taxes remitted (this matter is considered in detail in the next article in this issue); but in any case most economists would not expect the market to be restored in full.

A second possibility must be mentioned. If the defense program were scrapped, some might expect the government to embark upon other projects—perhaps public housing, highways and education. If this were done, and as much spent as is now being spent for defense, the market would be fully restored.

Does our prosperity, then, depend upon a large defense program? In a way, yes, though the answer must be in the conditional. Prosperity and defense are linked if taxes are held fixed and no other program is substituted for a canceled defense program. If, however, taxes were reduced, the threat to prosperity would be somewhat less serious; and if a substitute spending program were adopted in addition, the threat could conceivably be removed altogether.

This does not mean that there is no limit, that the larger the program the greater our prosperity. Too large a program would very likely lead to serious inflation, which could only be checked by raising taxes still further.

OUR REMARKS, so far, have been concerned with the aggregate size of the defense program. We must now consider any effects it may have by reason of its administration. A few observations to fill in the background are in order.

Of the roughly $40 billion spent annually, a little more than one-quarter goes for pay or allowances to those in uniform, and for salaries of civilians connected with defense. About this fact, there is little to be said save that it uses up labor which might be given to other purposes (or wasted in unemployment); and it supports a far from negligible market for consumer goods. The remainder of the $40 billion is spent upon the products of business firms—mostly for goods produced under contract and occasionally for goods purchased "off the shelf." The purchases under contract give rise to further complications.

If most of the money were spent upon small, familiar items like .30-caliber ammunition, or rifles, there would probably be little ground for worry about the economy on this score. In fact, however, most of the money goes to buy large, and very complicated items—missiles, jet aircraft, H-bombs, nuclear-powered submarines, radar equipment and the like. And a large amount of it pays for the research and development activities of large, specialized, business

FOCUS ON GRAND PRAIRIE . . *by Rip Manning*

Grand Prairie, Texas

MRS. B. M. HERD was in her kitchen making candy for Christmas when the economic bomb hit her home on Dec. 17. Her husband, a sheet-metal worker at Chance Vought, was one of the first of the 4,000 workers knocked out of work when the Navy canceled, without warning, two big defense contracts at the aircraft company's plant here, ten miles west of Dallas. [See St. Louis story on next page.]

"I looked up to see my husband walk in about 8:30 at night," Ruby Herd recalled grimly. "He usually didn't get home until 1:20 in the morning. I got scared when I saw him. He looked so hurt and discouraged. He just said, 'Well, I got laid off.'

"All I could think of was Christmas was just a week off and we had planned on giving the kids a big Christmas. Seemed like we'd had so much bad luck this last year. I'd been in the hospital three times and we were just kinda getting on our feet when this happened."

The story of the Herd family was like those of thousands of others in Grand Prairie and surrounding towns when the Navy announced it was canceling about $200 million in Chance Vought contracts. For days after the mass lay-offs, Grand Prairie was like any town struck by disaster. Faces of the townspeople reflected first the bewilderment of the unexpected blow. Then came the gnawing worry of unpaid bills and no paydays. A pall fell over the business district in what would normally be its busiest week of the year.

"Business hasn't fallen off—it's stopped!" Grand Prairie merchants said. The Dallas *Times Herald* thundered for "a searching re-examination of defense procurement policies [to] both serve the cause of strong defense and forestall future stunning blows to industries and communities that are closely tied in with defense production." Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson protested to Navy Secretary Thomas S. Gates, Jr. Stormed Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn: "I don't know why they did it. We gave the President a billion dollars more than he asked for." Senator Ralph Yarborough said he would call for a Congressional investigation of the methods of procuring and letting defense contracts. And Representative George Mahon, chairman of the powerful House subcommittee on defense appropriations, said he would call in Defense Secretary Neil McElroy and Navy leaders to explain their actions.

Stunning as the economic blow was, Grand Prairie was not hit as hard by the mass lay-offs as it might have been. Main key to the town's escape from complete disaster was the fact that although 3,000 of Chance Vought's 16,000 employees lived there, by far the largest number of them were high seniority workers. When Chance Vought employment rolls dropped to 12,000, Grand Prairie still housed about 2,200 of them.

One other factor was important in halting any complete collapse in Grand Prairie. This was the dogged optimism of the merchants and city officials. "Even some of the Grand Prairie people laid off at Chance Vought have gotten other jobs," Mayor C. R. Sargent said proudly. "Of course, some of them had to sell their equities in the homes and move out. But generally they were replaced by others moving in.

"You see, everybody still has a lot of confidence in Chance Vought and in the ability of the firm to qualify for other defense contracts. Of course, the people who work there are still pretty jittery about lay-offs. They know that if 4,000 could be laid off as they were just before Christmas, it could also happen to them."

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laboratories. The Pentagon then orders a variety of items which by their nature are bound to be relatively unfamiliar and are made even more unfamiliar by the numerous changes in specifications which occur after the contracts are first signed. (To those who feel that the explanation for the high price of American cars lies in the annual change of models, the spectacle of the hundreds and even thousands of changes in specifications for, say, a jet bomber must be more than alarming. But whether expensive or not, we are assured that these changes are necessary for our survival.)

Because the bulk (in dollar value) of objects bought are so complicated, and also because so often their development stems from an initial "research" deal with one of the larger industrial laboratories, the contracts for their purchase frequently are placed with one large firm, or at best with two or three. Moreover, the contracts are rarely placed on the basis of bids invited from a number of firms; very often only one firm has the "know-how," and the price must be negotiated. These practices, which I am prepared to believe are almost unavoidable, are likely to affect the structure and operations of our economy.

Does the defense program foster monopoly?

At first glance it would seem that when so much money is directed to the single producer of a certain product, or to two or three producers, the economy's structure is bound to respond. Most of us quite erroneously picture our economy in terms of many items, each produced by a large number of relatively small producers—like the typical 100-acre farmer. A great deal of our social folklore ("Each man's success depends upon him and him alone"), and even much of our economic analyses, are based upon this unrealistic picture.

The intrusion of a Pentagon purchaser into this dream world would be traumatic indeed. He would single out one, or maybe two, producers of an item, offer an enormous contract and exclude all other producers. No other buyers for the product would appear—after all, how many of *The Nation's* readers are in the market for an ICBM?—and the industry would soon consist of the lucky one or two firms which had landed the contract. Concentration and monopoly would inevitably result.

The situation in fact is not quite as bad as that, partly because it starts from a much worse initial position; even excluding defense business, concentration in many industries is already marked. Nevertheless, the situation is rather striking: in 1958, 40 per cent of all procurement contracts were awarded to ten business firms and 75 per cent went to the 100 largst prime contractors (the 75 per cent figure represents a 10 per cent gain over the preceding year). If one cares for preservation of the competitive (not only the capitalist) economy, these figures are frightening. Probably never has so large a buyer had his needs supplied by so few. And while this arrangement may not *create* a highly concentrated economy, it surely contributes mightily to it — far more mightily, indeed, than the combined efforts of the Federal Trade Commission and the Antitrust Division of the Department of Justice contribute in the other direction.

There is one qualification to be borne in mind. Prime contractors commonly do a certain amount of subcontracting. Thus the small-business sparrows may manage to fatten if the horses are well fed. Certainly the horses are looked after; but then, sparrows rarely develop into horses.

How does the defense program affect the price mechanism?

The operations of an unplanned

FOCUS ON ST. LOUIS . . *by Ted Schafers*

St. Louis

FOR SIX months preceding last December 17, officials of the McDonnell Aircraft Corporation, biggest single employer in the state and a booming firm for two decades, were in a state of acute apprehension. It had a new fighter plane for the U. S. Navy, the F4H-1, which the Navy liked very much. But the Navy also liked a new fighter developed by the Chance Vought aircraft company of Texas. Last fall, the House Appropriations Committee said the Navy could have one, but not both.

The result? Jubilation for McDonnell and for St. Louis. Had the contract been lost, the company would have been forced to lay off 6,000 employees. [In Grand Prairie, Texas, the result was the lay-off of 4,000 workers; see article on preceding page.]

The loss of 6,000 jobs would have been a serious economic blow to St. Louis. Last year the average annual payroll at McDonnell was $5,594. At this rate, the annual payroll loss would have been $36,000,000. Using the old rule of thumb that each dollar earned in a community turns over five times a year, the area's economic loss would have been about $182,000,000.

Not only is McDonnell's own work force a big economic factor here, but some 800 area subcontractors and suppliers do business with the company. Had the Navy contract been lost, more than 400 of these subcontractors would have suffered. A good slice of McDonnell's $400,000,000 in sales last year went to make up payrolls of subcontractors and suppliers.

A sizable number of other St. Louis plants are dependent in whole or in part on defense orders. General Steel Casting's plant (just across the Mississippi River) has most of its 1,500 work force producing castings for Army tanks. Emerson Electric Manufacturing Corporation (sales in excess of $72,000,000) has over 1,200 engineers and technicians among its 4,000 employees engaged in defense work. The company has become an important producer of electronic parts for missiles and aircraft-defense systems. Atomic energy keeps a staff of some 600 Mallinckrodt Chemical Company employees busy producing uranium fuels.

Almost every major St. Louis firm does some kind of defense work—either supplying the raw materials, like steel, or important components.

Aside from this industrial production, many government installations contribute heavily to the economic stability of the community.

St. Louis is fortunate in the diversification of its industry. But, in today's era of $100 million-plus contracts, a decision in Washington can send shivers down the spine of the most diversified community.

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economy are organized by the so-called market mechanism. Suppliers produce what they expect to be able to sell at a profit, and are subject to very strong pressures to produce as efficiently as possible. Buyers, too, in a model market economy, are under pressure to buy cheap and to economize in their use of what they get. There is, of course, a lot of unwarranted sentiment in favor of this kind of arrangement, but there is no doubt that it is highly effective in the solution of certain problems; so much can be inferred from the efforts of countries like Poland and Yugoslavia to restore the market mechanism to working order. Its achievements are the consequence of its ability to communicate information, and to provide incentives for an appropriate response to any change in the data.

Unfortunately, however, the market mechanism is a frail one. Its operations are hampered by too much monopoly, or serious price inflexibilities, or too high a level of taxation, or too rapid an inflation. In any of these situations, it either fails to communicate or passes along the wrong information, or it fails to provide sufficient incentives. Let us see now how the intrusion of our monolithic buyer would affect the mechanism, remembering that it is already subject to considerable strains.

The greatest danger is that the contracts themselves, by their very nature, weaken incentives to efficiency. Even assuming the utmost integrity and a very real desire to buy on the best possible terms on the part of the Pentagon's negotiator, he is normally not able to do any better than to sign a cost-plus contract in one of a number of guises. Indeed, something like 94 per cent of all procurement contracts are basically of this kind. And the producer who operates under such a contract is not under the pressure that really counts —his dollar profits—to keep costs to a minimum. Moreover, if he himself is not so influenced, he is unable to press his subcontractors and suppliers to be as efficient as *they* might be.

THE PENTAGON and Congress are, of course, conscious of this difficulty. Congress has indeed called for more contracts set in terms of fixed-price on the basis of advertised bids; but the difficulties of this procedure are staggering. In any case, the Pentagon has devoted a good deal of effort to the task of building-in incentive features to encourage efficiency. However, I seriously doubt their merit. Provisions for renegotiation may do away with the more flagrant opportunities to "cash in" on these contracts; so, too, may the government's right to inspect the firm's books and plants. But unless contracts are given on a fixed-price basis —and I mean *really* fixed—it is hard to see any way in which the producer can be given a real incentive to raise the efficiency of his operations. And, granted the sincere desire to prevent profiteering in a situation in which there is no competition, and the inability to secure accurate information about the appropriate level of costs, it is impossible to award contracts at prices that are *really* fixed. In this circumstance, it is not only efficiency in the use of the economy's resources of labor and capital that suffers; there is also a failure to communicate the desired information as to relative scarcities. If aluminum, for example, can be substituted for copper at no operational sacrifice, cost considerations ought to be decisive. But given the methods of Pentagon procurement, there is no reason to expect this outcome.

It is indeed ironic that the terribly expensive efforts we are making to guarantee our national security should so threaten the most valuable features of our economy.

IN summary: The current defense program undoubtedly weakens competition, and probably discourages efficiency; nevertheless, it is an important prop under our prosperity. Whether it should be regarded as a "burden" in the sense that it actually diverts resources away from uses which would have contributed handsomely to our well being—assuming our security to be not adversely affected—depends exclusively on whether we would be capable of utilizing them in an alternative way or would permit them to be wasted in depression and unemployment.

Conversion: the Magnitude of the Task... *by A. S. Goldberger*

ECONOMIC FORECASTERS are notorious squabblers; according to an old, by no means inaccurate, saw, all the economists in the world, laid end to end, would still point in different directions. In spite of this hallowed tradition, hardly a forecaster is now alive who doubts that the United States will soon pass that landmark of affluence—the half-trillion-dollar year.

As 1959 began, Gross National Product (G.N.P.)—the total output of goods and services—was pouring forth in the United States at the rate of $455 billion per year. Reporting on the President's new, barely (but blatantly) balanced budget, the *Wall Street Journal* (January 20) noted that the responsible government officials were predicting a rate of $480 billion by December. Conceding that this piece of official optimism may be premature, most forecasters would consider it a good bet that by 1962, Americans can demand and obtain 500 billion dollars' worth—at today's prices—of G.N.P. per year.

There is, indeed, little reason to doubt that productive capacity to satisfy this demand will be there. A growing labor force, with increased skills and equipment, is in the offing. In 1958's recession year, the 66.5 million employed Americans produced G.N.P. of $437 billion. Annually, the labor force increases by some 900,000 men and women. Output per worker is also due to increase, by perhaps 2 per cent per year. Even with 4 per cent of the labor force out of work in 1962, a $500 billion G.N.P. should be within the grasp of American households, businesses and governments.

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Production potential, however, is not the same animal as production. The demand, as well as the capacity, are required if 1962 is to be a $500 billion year. Currently, the national defense establishment directly absorbs some 10 per cent of total G.N.P. in the United States. Nipping off this chunk of demand would certainly set the forecasters spinning. Where would they point after settling down?

This year's defense expenditures—for personnel, parachutes, jets, missiles and other "goods and services"—are slated to be $45 billion. Those who see a G.N.P. of $500 billion by 1962 have in mind a continuation of defense spending at no lower than the present rate. Dismantling the defense establishment would call for some hasty recalculations on their part.

WE MAY at least speculate on the outcome of such recalculations. Abolition of military expenditures—matched, dollar for dollar, with tax cuts—will have obvious implications for particular trades, industries and geographical regions. And even speculation in the large will lead to provocative conclusions. For what is clear is that the transfer of purchasing power from the military back to the taxpayer is unlikely to leave the total demand for G.N.P. unchanged.

The defense establishment, after all, exploits its purchasing power to the utmost. A dollar of tax receipts by the federal government is turned, with unseemly haste, into a dollar of demand for current production. Consumers are not spending machines in the same way. Finding his tax liability reduced by a dollar, the individual is likely to exploit only part of his increased purchasing power in demanding current production. Typically, something will be saved—to increase his bank account or life insurance, perhaps to reduce his debts. None of these acts makes a demand on the productive resources of the economy.

Reductions in personal taxes can, then, be expected to increase the current demand for consumer goods and services, but not dollar for dollar.

As for business, firms are likely to step up or step down production in response to changes in the demands they face. The shift of purchasing power from government to consumers, which a package demilitarization program involves, will naturally change the pattern of demand facing business firms. Construction of new plants and equipment to turn out consumer goods should tend, in part, at least, to offset the vanished need to expand and replace the plant and equipment now used for defense production. By and large, business demand for new capital—plant and equipment—tends to rise and fall with the net profits, after taxes, earned by business. If corporation-profit taxes are reduced along with personal taxes, the net profits of firms are likely to rise.

Today's $455 billion of Gross National Product includes $295 billion of consumer expenditures, $65 billion of business capital expenditures, and $95 billion of government purchases. Of the last, $42 billion is spent by state and local governments and $53 billion by the federal government. The federal expenditures comprise about $8 billion on non-defense items and, as we have seen, $45 billion on defense. In projecting G.N.P. forward to the near future, the forecasters find it convenient to consider the following components in turn.

First, how does G.N.P. shape up if present trends continue? State and local governments have been increasing their expenditures by some $2 billion annually; it seems likely that they will continue to do so. Federal non-defense purchases, on the other hand, show no recent upward trend. Price increases apart—and without demilitarization—defense expenditures are likely to remain at a constant level.

A growing population will stimulate consumer demand; by early 1962, there will be almost ten million more Americans. If the present tax laws persist, and if consumers' saving patterns also persist, consumer expenditures of $325 billion by 1962 are in the offing. Increased profits and replacement requirements could then push business' capital expenditures up to $74 billion.

The cold-war economy of early 1962, then, would shape up like this: consumer expenditures, $325 billion; business' capital expenditures, $74 billion; government purchases, $101 billion; total: $500 billion of Gross National Product. The tax laws now in force would catch enough of the rising incomes to make 1962 a balanced-budget year, taking all levels of government together.

BUT IF PEACE should break out? Suppose that federal non-defense expenditures do remain about the same, while state and local governments continue to increase their expenditures by $2 billion per year. With the $45 billion defense budget eliminated, the total government demand for goods and services would be down to $56 billion per year in early 1962.

Turn to government revenues, where a matching $45 billion reduction is to be made. Would-be forecasters should first note the obvious: dollar for dollar, some tax cuts would stimulate private demand more than others.

In 1957, the federal government's tax take included $12 billion of excises (sales taxes), $22 billion of corporate-profits taxes, and $36 billion of personal-income taxes. There are many ways of reducing the total tax take by $45 billion. The following is a conceivable package: eliminate all federal excises, cut the corporate tax in half, and lower the personal-income tax rates to yield $22 billion less. With 1957 incomes and sales, this tax cut would have yielded $45 billion less in government receipts than actually was taken that year. Introduced today as part of a demilitarization program, these drastic changes in the federal tax system would match the reduction in federal expenditures, and would undoubtedly stimulate to some extent the demand for both consumer and producer goods.

In estimating how consumer demand would respond to this tax-cut package, the forecasters will want to sort out wage-and-salary earners from other consumers. Past experience indicates that this breakdown—briefly, between labor and property income — is necessary to predict, at all reliably, how consumer spending will vary with consumer income.

Students of consumer-spending

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FOCUS ON SANTA MONICA . . *by Gene Marine*

Santa Monica, California

THERE WAS a time when Santa Monica got along quite well on the revenue from its tourists, its moderate-income rentiers, its few really wealthy residents and a number of small industries. No more. Santa Monica's largest taxpayer, by a margin so great as to put it into a class by itself and even to make Santa Monica dependent on the revenue to a surprising extent, is the Douglas Aircraft Corporation. Today, when Douglas' contracts (and payroll) diminish, all of Santa Monica utters an agonized and anguished cry.

Early in December, the Southern California officials of the International Association of Machinists decided that layoffs at Douglas, both in Santa Monica and in other nearby Douglas plants at El Segundo and Torrance, were getting too heavy and lasting too long for comfort. The I.A.M.'s vice president for the area, Roy Brown, wired California's Senators. The union told its members that Douglas has fallen from third place in military contracts to 37th, and that they, too, should start the letters flowing.

Not often, at least in California, does a labor union start a movement so eagerly joined by businessmen. The Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce asked Congressmen to check on "discrimination against Douglas." Civic groups and businessmen's clubs got into the act: the city council added its collective voice, and the county's Board of Supervisors chimed in.

From what the Douglas people say to all this, the whole unhealthy syndrome of Southern California's new disease can be pieced together. Match 1958 against 1957 in any month you like, and the employment situation in the aircraft industry here hasn't looked so good. Between the two Aprils, for instance, aircraft jobs dropped from 285,200 to 239,600.

Pointing out that the firm's president, Donald W. Douglas, Jr., had predicted "declining job opportunities" a year ago (no great trick in a growing recession), a Douglas statement notes that there are a few less obvious reasons for the drop in jobs. The world-famous DC-6 and DC-7 transports, all products of Santa Monica, have given way to the jet-engined DC-8, which is being built in another Douglas plant (in Long Beach) and which is only just getting started. This is a sample of a changeover taking place all through the commercial-aircraft segment of the industry.

Far more important is the fact that when the California Department of Employment talks about "aircraft" they mean "airplanes." While the November figures for "aircraft" employment show something of a drop between 1957 and 1958, the department also advises that between the same two Novembers, employment in the manufacture of "electrical equipment" rose from 101,000 to 103,600, and employment in "ordnance" rose from 33,400 to a new all-time high of 46,800.

"Electrical equipment" includes the sort of things they put into missiles. "Ordnance" includes missiles themselves.

Fewer aircraft, more missiles—this is the real source of Santa Monica's cries of pain, of the Machinists' anguish, of the ambiguousness of California employment figures. "Much of this situation," says the Douglas statement itself, "has come about as a result of the transition from airplane to missile production, which requires fewer man-hours of direct labor."

What does this mean for Southern California as a whole? Quite a bit. The contract backlogs as of December 31, 1958, for the immediate Los Angeles area alone, amounted to about $1.5 *billion* for military aircraft and about $642 million in missiles. The trend can be seen by looking at two other facts. For the first time in years, commercial aircraft contracts total nearly the same as military aircraft contracts. And looking back six months, we find that the military aircraft backlog then was higher ($1.7 billion), but the missile backlog was lower ($529 million). In other words, the aircraft figure is getting smaller, the missile figure is getting larger.

Machinists' Union President Al Hayes has another word about the situation, too. According to *The New York Times* of last October, Hayes has charged the Defense Department with setting a ceiling on wage rates "without authority from Congress or directive from the White House." Whatever else it means, this can be taken as an indicator that wages are getting tighter.

The prognosis, then, is clear. With the Defense Department and the contractors watching wage rates more closely, and with the shift to missiles instead of aircraft, it seems safe to say that while Southern California will still get large chunks of arms-race money, there will probably be less of it finding its way into pay envelopes, and from there into the coffers of the hi-fi shops and the used car lots that are the outward faces of Santa Monica and her sisters.

patterns find clear differences between wage-earners on the one hand, and farmers, businessmen, professionals and rentiers on the other. Out of each added dollar of personal income after taxes, wage-earners typically spend about 75 cents; the corresponding figure for the others is about 50 cents. In accounting for this marked difference, some analysts would stress the lower income of the average wage-earner; others, the plowing back of profits by the individual businessman. In any event, increased after-tax property income is likely to stimulate less demand for consumer goods than increased after-tax labor income.

With this in mind, consider how the demilitarization program is likely to affect the division of after-tax income between labor and property.

First, a large part — perhaps 40 per cent — of the defense budget goes directly as wage income to government employees, including the uniformed forces along with civilian employees of the military establishment. Second, the balance consists of defense procurement from business. Studies at Harvard's Economic Research Project indicate that labor shares in the income of these businesses in about the same proportion as it shares in the income of producers of consumer goods. If anything, the wage component of the defense *procurement* dollar is somewhat higher than the wage component in other enterprises.

Third, the tax-reduction program is likely to be relatively unfavorable

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to wage-earners. The federal personal-income tax law is not as progressive in practice as it appears to be on paper. Still, it does work in the direction of equalization of after-tax incomes in the United States. Any *reduction* in the personal-income tax would then tend to render incomes less equal. Reductions in the corporate-tax rate would reinforce this tendency.

On at least these three counts, the package demilitarization program would reduce wage-earners' share in increased after-tax incomes. With relatively more income flowing to those who spend only 50 cents on consumer goods, the demand for consumer goods could not be expected to rise in proportion to after-tax incomes of consumers.

In spite of this, the forecasters will continue to expect population growth to contribute to increased consumer demand. Also on the positive side, cuts in profit taxes may call forth some expansion of plant and equipment by business. Again using past experience as a guide, net capital formation by business could increase by 50 cents with every dollar's increase in after-tax profits.

Pulling these threads together, the perseverant forecaster might come up with this picture of a demilitarized American economy in early 1962: consumer expenditures, $340 billion: business capital expenditures, $90 billion; government purchases, $56 billion. Total, Gross National Product of $486 billion. The reduced tax rates would yield government (at all levels) revenues just sufficient to cover their expenditures.

THIS speculative exercise suggests that a demilitarized America would be demanding $486 billion per year by 1962, well above today's $455 billion rate, but also substantially short of the $500 billion projected for a continuing cold-war economy and considerably less than necessary to sustain full employment of human and material resources. Private demand, in other words, should not be expected to rise to the opportunity created by an abandonment of the national-defense program.

Does this speculation — or numbers game to the more cynical — imply something more than disappointment to the 500-club of forecasters? Recall that the productivity, as well as the size, of the labor force is on the increase. By early 1962, the labor force will have grown to just over 74 million. Increased productivity will mean that some 71 million persons would be required to produce a $500 billion G.N.P. Even a cold-war economy, then, would leave 4 per cent of the labor force unemployed.

The $486 billion of total output demanded by a demilitarized America could, in 1962, be produced by some 69 million persons. This would leave 5 million unemployed—6.7 per cent of the available labor force. And this is close to the average rate of unemployment which prevailed last year, during the Second Eisenhower Recession.

This unemployment picture, in turn, should lead the cautious forecaster to reconsider the estimates of business capital expenditures. Even with profits after taxes running high, vast expansion of plant and equipment would be unlikely in the face of excess capacity and substantial unemployment. Our picture of the demilitarized 1962 economy put capital expenditures at $90 billion—over 18 per cent of G.N.P. But such a high rate of investment (and the concomitant rate of expansion of output) would be virtually unprecedented in our history, and it is doubtful that it could be sustained. To Gerhard Colm of the National Planning Association, perhaps the most renowned economic projector in America, even the 1955-57 rate of 15 per cent "suggested that the economy has been moving towards an imbalance in our economic structure which would have to be corrected sooner or later." (*American Economic Review*, May, 1958.)

Returning to consumers, expenditures of $340 billion in 1962 would boil down to $1,837 per capita, which is almost 10 per cent above the current figure. This, in turn, implies that consumer-goods expenditures per capita would have increased by an average of just over 3 per cent per year, which has indeed been the average over the prosperous years from 1951 to 1958. Even in this affluent society, consumers have been devilishly clever in finding ways to spend their money. But there is some evidence that the well of ingenuity is being depleted. John Kenneth Galbraith claims that the increasing din of the hucksters is itself evidence of a diminishing intensity of demand in the souls of consumers.

SUCH SECOND thoughts on the rate of capital formation by business and the rate of increase in per capita consumer expenditures would convince the cautious forecaster that our estimate of a $486 billion G.N.P. for early 1962 leans on the optimistic side. But this rather sobering conclusion clearly stems from a good dose of guesswork. Doesn't our experience with a much deeper demilitarization program—the post-World War II reconversion—support a happier view today?

In 1945, federal government expenditures—almost exclusively devoted to the war—ran to $75 billion, over a third of total output. Two years later, federal expenditures were down to $13 billion. Measured at today's prices, this slice in government demand sized up at $110 billion, which is almost 2½ times as large as a demilitarization program would be today. The war's end also brought major tax cuts, and demand by consumers and business leaped forward.

But behind the postwar surge in private demand lay not only tax cuts, but a hope chest of suppressed desires—and a treasure chest of accumulated funds—which had filled up during the war years. Even so, it was not until early 1950 that total output in the United States returned, price increases apart, to its 1945 level.

Automobile manufacturers, who are not famed as prophets of gloom and doom, would be among the first to concede that no such repressed demand throbs in the hearts of today's consumers. Nor, as 1959 opened, did American industry find its capacity strained to the utmost. At a recent hearing of economists by the Joint Economic Committee of Congress, the "most optimistic view" expressed—according to the *Wall Street Journal*—was that of a Chase Manhattan Bank executive, William F. Butler, who did not foresee capacity production in the nation be-

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fore late this year or early in 1960.

With no pent-up consumer demand, and no pressure on capacity, increases in private demand in a demilitarized America would be based upon tax cuts and population growth. If taxes are cut by no more than the cuts in the military budget, private demand might still suffice to push total output up to $486 billion by early 1962.

The $500 billion year would still be beckoning, but from still farther off in the future. It is possible that sharper cuts in taxes could close the gap. An obvious alternative would be increased non-military expenditures by government.

Power Blocks to a Peace Economy . . *by Paul M. Sweezy*

EARLIER ARTICLES in this issue have shown the important sustaining role defense spending is now playing in the United States, and how serious the consequences would be of a drastic cutback without a compensating increase of government spending of a non-defense, or welfare, character.

The inference is that if and when it becomes possible to reduce defense spending, there should take place a comparable expansion in the budget for constructive civilian purposes.

This inference forms the basis of a liberal faith and a liberal program. The faith, in the words of America's most eminent liberal economist, is that "We Can Prosper Without War Orders" (John K. Galbraith in *The New York Times Magazine*, June 22, 1952); the program consists of an enumeration, more or less detailed, of the projects and enterprises which ought to take the place of arms in the government's budget.

Fortunately — so it seems — there is no lack of things for the government to do. Nearly everyone agrees that relative to the needs of the age we live in — an age dominated by science, a rapidly expanding population, and the competition between social systems — our public services are in a deplorable state both quantitatively and qualitatively. We need more education, more social security, a better environment, more conservation — and much else besides. And we are under no illusion that these things can be provided by private enterprise: they are, and will certainly remain, the responsibility of government. Nor is there any question about the quantitative sufficiency of the need for increased public services. Take the plight of our cities, for example. Reginald Isaacs, chairman of Harvard's Department of City and Regional Planning, after extensive research for the American Council to Improve Our Neighborhoods, concluded that urgently required outlays for urban renewal will total almost two *trillion* dollars by 1970! "The real and total costs of urban renewal are almost beyond cities' and citizens' comprehension," he writes. Even if we are very sanguine about the share of the burden to be borne by private enterprise and local governments, "necessary federal participation expenditures alone will rival those for national security." It would be easy to demonstrate that the need for other public services likewise amounts to many billions of dollars annually. And if by any chance we should ever run out of worthy domestic projects, the development needs of the rest of the world could easily fill the gap for decades to come, and with a great deal more benefit to the American people than they can hope to derive from arms spending.

Against this background, it seems obvious enough that the crux of the economic problem is not to find ways and means for the government to spend money, but rather to decide which projects should come first and which should wait and for how long.

IS THIS, then, the answer to the question whether we can prosper without war orders? It would be most agreeable if it were, but unfortunately there is more to the matter. There is also a *political* problem involved — not, to be sure, in the superficial sense of party platforms and personalities, but in the deeper sense of the structure of institutions and interests in a private-enterprise society, and the pressures and compulsions and taboos which arise from this structure. When we adopt this standpoint, we will find, I think, that the problem of "prospering without war orders" is very much more difficult and complicated than it first appears.

LET US begin by examining the nature of arms spending and the characteristic reactions to which it gives rise in various sectors of the population. We will then be in a position to make meaningful comparisons with welfare spending. There are four points which it seems to me require special emphasis.

1. Arms spending neither creates nor involves competition with private enterprise. Its impact on private enterprise is all the other way: the military is an ideal customer, willing and able to buy enormous quantities at generously profitable prices. Moreover, arms spending typically entails various direct and indirect subsidies to business, especially in the area of research and development and the training of specialized personnel at government expense.

2. Arms spending does not directly conflict with the short-term interests of any major pressure group. (That it conflicts with the real long-term interests of everybody is a fact which, up to now at any rate, seems to have but slight political significance.) This means that there is no powerful group in society which is moved by its special interests to oppose arms spending. On the other hand, some powerful groups derive special advantages from arms spending in the way of profits and power—the military itself, the shipbuilding and aircraft industries, and so on. These latter groups have every reason to push as hard as they can for more and more arms spending — and, given the lack of determined opposition, they are for the most part pushing on an open door. Organized labor and agriculture, both tradition-

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ally spending-minded, tend to interpret the arms budget in terms of jobs and markets and hence are favorably disposed to its enlargement. Small business, even though it is fully aware that a disproportionately large amount of armament money goes to big business, reacts not by opposition but by demanding an increased share for itself.

3. From the point of view of the power elite as a whole, the militarization of society, of which a large arms budget is of course the keystone, has the inestimable advantage of inducing, or if necessary enforcing, attitudes of conformity and docility in the underlying population. No one saw this more clearly or stated it more incisively than Veblen. A warlike policy, he wrote in *The Theory of Business Enterprise*, "makes for a conservative animus on the part of the populace"; and the more a country is subjected to militarism, "the more effectually will the members of the community be trained into habits of subordination and away from that growing propensity to make light of personal authority which is the chief infirmity of democracy." It is, I believe, almost impossible to overestimate the importance of this consideration to a ruling class which is determined to resist the present world-wide trend to radicalization. Given the power elite's ability to shape and manipulate the ideology of the entire society, we have here what amounts to a built-in, deeply rooted bias in favor of arms spending.

4. The great *disadvantage* of a large arms budget is that it necessitates heavy taxation — and this of course affects in varying degrees all groups and classes. The inhibiting strength of this factor, however, is decisively weakened by two counteracting forces. First, there is pretty wide agreement among economists that big business is now able to treat a large part of its taxes (including the corporate-income tax) as costs and to pass them along to the consumer. Since big business is also the main beneficiary of arms spending, it follows that it gains much more from this source than it loses through the related higher taxation. Second, the reluctance of the rest of the community (which cannot shift its taxes) to pay higher levies in support of the military is effectively neutralized by the "instinctive" force of patriotism. "War taxes," William James observed in *The Moral Equivalent of War*, "are the only ones men never hesitate to pay, as the budgets of all nations show us."

IT SEEMS clear, in sum, that a private-enterprise society generates enormously powerful pressures in favor of, and only weak opposition against, the enlargement of arms spending. How is it with welfare spending?

Here, too, there are strong, indeed irresistible, pressures making for expansion. They stem basically from the sheer necessity for more and better public services as population grows and society becomes more complex. In this season of budget making, the newspapers bring us daily evidence of the ubiquity and imperative nature of this necessity: Republicans and Democrats, economizers and spenders, Governor Rockefeller and Governor Brown, all are inescapably driven to assent to more welfare spending and more taxes to pay for it. Thus at first glance there would seem to be a striking parallel between this case and that of arms spending. Yet a closer look will show, I think, that the similarities are superficial and the differences profound. If we ask the same questions about welfare spending as we asked about arms spending, we shall see that the balance of interests and prejudices is strongly *against* welfare spending and that its rate of increase is therefore held down to the minimum consistent with the continued functioning of the private-enterprise system.

1. Competition with private enterprise. There are many urgent social needs which government can satisfy only by entering into some form of competition with private enterprise. Two examples will suffice. River-valley development—a logical government function—is essential for flood control, water conservation, rebuilding eroded soils and so on. But it also produces public electric power which competes with private power and is therefore bitterly opposed not only by the utilities, but by the whole big-business community. The history of TVA is eloquent testimony to the effectiveness of this opposition. World-famous, and by any rational standard a brilliant success, depression-born TVA has lived most of its life on the defensive, has been prevented from realizing anything like its full potential, and has never been duplicated in any of the many other neglected river valleys of the United States.

A second and more topical example comes from the field of transportation. Our present system is a crazy patchwork of duplication and inefficiency, regulation and subsidization, inadequacy and (in the provision of commutation services) impending breakdown. It is no secret that the solution lies along lines of comprehensive planning and rehabilitation, and even the ideologues of private enterprise are beginning to understand that this can be accomplished only by a vast extension of government ownership (see, for example, the article "A Plan to Save the Railroads" in the August, 1958, issue of *Fortune*, which implies much that it either doesn't want or doesn't dare to say). Yet so strong is the taboo against government in business that even in the disaster-threatened field of commutation there is no discernible pressure for government ownership. This is not to say that government ownership will never come. It will, of course; but as things now stand it will come only when it is literally necessary to the orderly functioning of the system, and it will bring few of the positive benefits which would flow from bold action and imaginative planning. The moral of this case, as of TVA, is surely plain: wherever welfare spending requires or implies competition with private enterprise it will be energetically fought by the most powerful groups in the community. The contrast with arms spending could hardly be sharper.

2. The attitude of major pressure groups. Even when there is no question of direct competition with private enterprise, welfare spending often creates conflicts of interest among important pressure groups and hence evokes the kind of determined opposition which is lacking

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in the case of arms spending. Low-cost housing, potentially a vast field for welfare spending, is the best case in point. An *effective* low-cost housing program would necessarily call for extensive building in open spaces (which abound in most American cities). But this is just what the powerful, urban real-estate interests are against. Hence the concentration on relatively small-scale "slum clearance" projects which liberally reward slum landlords without making an appreciable dent on the shortage of low-rent housing. It is true that labor as a whole has no vested interests which are violated by welfare spending, and in the long run, as we shall see below, this fact may be of decisive importance. But it is also true that once prosperity has become dependent on arms spending, as is the case in this country today, there is bound to be strong resistance in the labor movement to a *shift* to welfare spending as a substitute. The job pattern would unavoidably change and to the detriment of some of the best-organized groups in the labor movement.This goes far to account for the otherwise baffling fact that the labor movement has provided strong support for arms spending and has done little in the way of formulating and promoting a substitute program of welfare spending on the required scale.

3. The general bias against welfare spending. We saw above that militarism induces a general docility in the underlying population which the power elite has used to create a generalized bias in favor of a large arms budget. For an analogous reason, the power elite opposes welfare spending: the more that people come to rely on the state for the satisfaction of their wants and needs, the less respect they will have for the eternal verities of the private-property order and the more open they will be to socialist influences. It is easy to laugh at the cries of alarm about "creeping socialism" and the like, but the truth is that for the propertied classes it is no laughing matter. In the United States, capitalism's greatest strength lies in its unquestioning acceptance by the vast majority of the people. The preservation of this acceptance requires not only that the system should work reasonably well, but that it should do so without the state's acquiring too dominant a role; and this in turn forces the power elite into an unremitting struggle on every front, especially the political and ideological fronts, against any expansion of the state's welfare functions beyond the necessary minimum. Capitalism came into the world fighting the feudal state for the unconditional supremacy of the private economy, and capitalism's defenders today know that its doom will be sealed when that supremacy is lost. This is the main source of that generalized bias against welfare spending which liberals like Galbraith find at once so anachronistic and so frustrating.

4. The influence of taxation. Quantitatively, the taxation associated with a given amount of welfare

FOCUS ON DETROIT . . *by B. J. Widick*

Detroit

THE KOREAN armistice marked the end of the "good old days" for Detroit and Michigan, once "the arsenal of democracy." A whole new set of forces has been operating to revise the impact of the war economy on this area, including the expansion and decentralization of the auto industry, the increasing diversification of General Motors and the changes in the nature of war weapons.

Unofficial but reliable estimates suggest that 150,000 jobs have been lost to Michigan in the last five years due to the cancellation of defense contracts and shifts in the character of defense spending. While most economists estimate that between 10 and 15 per cent of the total national work force is occupied in the arms sector, in Michigan today the figure is closer to 5 per cent.

Michigan averaged 406,000 unemployed during 1958. This was 13.9 per cent of the state's total labor force, which averaged 864,000 in manufacturing and 2,112,000 in non-manufacturing (including farming) for the year. Within this framework, the approximately 50,000 workers who still hold down defense jobs in the area loom large. A further cut in defense employment would hurt badly; even good years by the auto industry in 1959 and 1960 would not take up the slack. If the auto industry has a 5.3 million-car year in 1959 (plus a million trucks) there would still be 356,000 unemployed (12.2 per cent of the work force); in a 6.4 million-car year in 1960, unemployment might go down to 293,000 (10.6 per cent of the work force). In this context, any further decrease in military contracts for Michigan would aggravate a very sore and permanent problem.

General Motors, the country's leader in defense contracts, is firmly fixed in the public mind with the manufacture of automobiles; the fact is that 35 per cent of its total business is non-automotive. This diversification, including electrical equipment, diesel motors, locomotives, refrigerators, etc., give General Motors an enormous advantage in its bidding and subcontracting. But little of this helps Michigan now, since G.M. no longer concentrates its military work in this area.

The impact of unemployment in Michigan on the United Auto Workers union, as well as on the state as a whole, scarcely needs belaboring. What is less known is how the general cutbacks in defense have affected the power and influence of the U.A.W. Says the current issue of *Solidarity*, official U.A.W. publication:

> Tens of thousands of U.A.W. members in the aircraft industry have been laid off due to Defense Department cutbacks . . .
>
> Among U.A.W. organized plants affected are Chance Vought in Dallas, Bell Aircraft in Buffalo, Martin Company in Baltimore, Vertol Aircraft Corporation in Morton, Pa., Douglas Aircraft in Tulsa and Tucson, Fairchild, Long Island, N. Y., several Curtiss-Wright divisions and other plants.

Further cutbacks in military contracts would certainly add to Michigan's hardships, but most economists agree that even *increases* would be of no permanent help. Apparently the time has come when the U.A.W., the politicians and the business and industrial leaders of the state will have to begin to think in terms of a more basic solution than the props of a war economy.

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spending is not likely to be significantly different from that associated with the same amount of arms spending, and since big business can in either case pass its supposed share of the burden along to consumers, it might appear that this is a relatively minor factor in the choice for or against welfare spending. This is far from being so, however. When it comes to welfare spending, the reluctance of the average individual to paying taxes is no longer neutralized by patriotism, and emerges to lend powerful reinforcement to the anti-welfare-spending campaign of the power elite. "It is curious," we read in a letter to *The New York Times* (February 6), "that many people will freely and voluntarily spend every dollar they can afford and sometimes more on individual purchases of goods and services and at the same time complain bitterly about their taxes. The common attitude seems to be that private spending is beneficial to the community, while money paid in taxes is 'poured down the drain' and does nobody any good." The observation is keen, and it explains much of the opposition to expanded welfare spending. But why is it curious? Most people have to struggle to make ends meet and naturally resent the impositions of the tax-gatherer; and the "common attitude" referred to merely reflects one of the oldest and most deep-rooted articles of capitalist faith.

THERE is one further obstacle to welfare spending which ought to be mentioned. The legislators and administrators of a private-enterprise society for the most part belong to, or share, the preconceptions of the power elite. They are against welfare spending beyond the minimum necessary. When they undertake a program because they think they have to, they see to it — consciously or unconsciously makes no difference— that the job is sufficiently botched so as to vindicate their prejudices and demonstrate to the underlying population the futility of expecting salvation from the state. Many examples of this could be cited, but one will suffice: public housing, potentially one of the largest objects of welfare spending. During the 1930s, public housing was a popular cause. Many expected great things from it; others regarded it as a menace; few doubted that it would become increasingly important in the future. Now, little more than two decades later, federal appropriations for public housing are relatively insignificant, and cities are not even using all the funds available to them. "The movement today," write the editors of *Fortune* in *The Exploding Metropolis*, "is so weak that most real-estate groups hardly bother to attack any more." There is no simple explanation of this, of course, but neither is there any doubt that one of the most important reasons is disillusionment with public housing as it has been practiced to date. Fatally wedded to the doctrine of slum clearance, it has done little to relieve housing shortages; while the typical mausoleum-like "project" has signally failed to provide a congenial environment to live in. If there had been a deliberate plot to sabotage public housing, it could hardly have succeeded more brilliantly.

IF, AS I THINK, it makes sense to speak of a *need* for arms spending and a *need* for welfare spending — needs that are objectively valid even if quantitatively imprecise — then the foregoing arguments can be summed up in the proposition that all the pressures generated by capitalist society tend to set the level of arms spending far above need and the level of welfare spending far below need. It follows that whenever, in order to offset depressive forces at work in the private economy, there is a need for government spending *as such*, there will be a strong tendency for the flow of public funds to go into arms rather than welfare.

How does this bear on the question whether we can prosper without war orders? Fortunately, it is not necessary in this connection to raise the issue of how great the need for arms spending is at the present time. For the sake of the argument, we can postulate that it is as large as, or even larger than, the present national defense budget. The point is that, assuming a decline in need, there is no guarantee that arms spending would go down with it. And if arms spending should decline, there would be formidable psychological, political and ideological barriers to a compensating increase in welfare spending. On the basis of experience to date, the probable alternatives to a sharp reduction in the need for arms spending would appear to be prosperity with continuing war orders or depression without them. Those of us who believe that arms spending is already inflated out of all proportion to need will feel that this theory has already been tested and found valid: for others the test will begin to come if and when they in turn are convinced that the need for arms spending has fallen significantly below the defense budget.

NONE OF THIS should be taken to indicate a fatalistic acceptance of the choice: prosperity through war orders or depression. This choice rises out of a given constellation of socio-political forces which is neither unchangeable nor unchanging. It is even possible to indicate the kind of changes which would be necessary to pose the problem in a new form. Some powerful segment of American society would have to become conscious of its stake in prosperity through expanded welfare spending and of the dangers of continued reliance on arms spending, and it would then have to organize to fight for basic changes in government policy. That the labor movement is the only serious candidate for this role emerges from what was said above. Taken as a whole, labor has no short-run vested interests in arms spending as opposed to welfare spending, and in the long run it stands to be the main beneficiary of the increased public services which welfare spending would bring with it.

Of course, even an aroused labor movement, fighting for its own interests — which in this case are also the interests of society as a whole— would not automatically achieve success. But it would at any rate open up new vistas and create new possibilities. In the meantime, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that in the absence of some such development there is no realistic hope of prospering without war orders.

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The Discovery of Africa

Anthony Sampson

WHEN asked about African writing, most people think of white writers. That is not surprising, for in the last ten years there has been an impressive upsurge of white writing from Africa. But inevitably such literature is incomplete, as the white communities themselves are incomplete; and under this smooth surface there begins to emerge something rougher, cruder, but much more powerful — the self-expression of Africa itself.

To understand the black culture of Africa, one must first look at the white culture which has overshadowed and dominated it — and to some extent shaped it. West and East Africa — apart from occasional books by European visitors (Graham Greene, for example, wrote *The Heart of the Matter* after his visit to Sierra Leone), or the charming East African tales of Isak Dinesen, or the sensational Mau Mau novel by Robert Ruark, *Something of Value* — have produced no serious body of European literature. The bulk of white writing comes from the southern tip of the continent, from South Africa and Rhodesia, where the white population is concentrated.

Many people have compared the white South African novelists to the Russians before the revolution — in their themes if not in their power. They show the same passionate absorption in the peasantry; the same broad landscape of a vast, unhappy country; the same fascination with gross contrasts of wealth and poverty. Some English writers have found in the conflict and tragedy of South Africa a stimulus and force that they feel is gone from their own country. How far the South African literary flowering is due to this stimulus, how far to a coincidence of talents, is a point much argued; but certainly its literature cannot be separated from the political dilemmas that form its background.

Nearly all the major South African writers are involved to some extent in the racial conflict. It is true that probably the two finest of them, Nadine Gordimer and Doris Lessing (a Rhodesian now living in London), have written about many other settings than Africa. They are both very delicate writers, both at their best in the short story, concerned more with the subtleties of personal relationships in tranquillity than with the bold antitheses and dramas that racial themes are apt to produce. Nevertheless, they derive much of their intensity and their irony from the background of racial unease. Even when they write about white people only, their stories are thrown into relief, and given an extra tension, by the sense of fear and foreboding from unseen Africans — in a way that recalls much Southern writing in America.

In her latest novel, *A World of Strangers*, Miss Gordimer is wholly concerned with the mutual impact of white and black, as seen through the eyes of a young Englishman who lives in both worlds in Johannesburg. It is probably the most perceptive study ever written about African race relations — the more so since it is quite without the sentimentality of polemic — and in many ways it represents the summit of white achievement in the literary exploration of Africa.

Most South African writers are much more directly involved with politics: two of the best of them, Alan Paton and Harry Bloom, are almost as much propagandists (and very good propagandists) as novelists. Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* has remained a monument to South African liberalism. But it was written in the days of comparative optimism for the future, as a "story of comfort in desolation." The grimmer side of the coin is shown in Harry Bloom's *Episode in the Transvaal*, a masterly story of an African location riot, which holds out little hope of comfort.

Other South Africans are involved less politically, but just as powerfully, in the crisis of color. The young novelist, Dan Jacobson, in his bizarre, superbly written melodrama, *Dance in the Sun*, catches the frenzy of racial obsession on an Afrikaner farm; it strikes echoes of the Deep South, but is infused with a simplicity and tautness that is all African. This undercurrent is found again in his strange comedy about illicit diamonds, *The Price of Diamonds*. Laurens Van Der Post, the romantic Afrikaner novelist and explorer (*Venture to the Interior* and *In a Province*), derives from the African predicament a vague Jungian mysticism, a sense of primeval powers and dark influences, which enthralls some readers and exasperates others.

These English-speaking writers (as opposed to the white Afrikaners, who are largely preoccupied with their own people and problems) attempt to penetrate the black man's mind, to tap the mysterious thoughts which arouse the curiosity of every white man in Africa. Ever since the veteran South African writer William Plomer (now living in London) first explored the theme in his story *Ula Masondo*, the classic journey from the reserves of Zululand or Pondoland to the gold-mines of Johannesburg (a quarter of a million Africans make the journey on contract every year) has haunted European writers. It reappeared in *Cry, the Beloved Country*, in Mopeli-Paulus' *Blanket Boy's Moon*, in Phyllis Altman's *Law of the Vultures*. From a mixture of genuine curiosity and racial narcissism, white writers seem compelled to speculate on how a primitive black visitor must first see the white man's world.

SOME of this writing — Plomer's, for example — is perceptive and revealing and based on a true compassion; but a great deal, including much by reputable writers, is trash. The representation of black men in white novels is often an excuse for the worst kind of sentimental, unrealistic fairy-tales, which no one could get away with in writing about his own race. Simple "Uncle Tom" Africans talking fake Biblical English about "white man's magic," in a way that no African was ever heard to talk, are forever appearing in the inferior writing about Africa. It is one of the minor forms of racial exploitation, but one of the most pernicious.

Because, however seriously most white South Africans try to explore black minds, they remain unwilling to regard them as straightforward human beings, with minds and motives of their own. The interest for most white writers is in the point of contact between black and white — a contact which is only a very small part of a black man's life. Only in a few writers, like Nadine Gordimer, do black men appear, not as villains or heroes or victims, but as private people with private problems.

This, of course, is the gist of the complaint of educated Africans against white writing. They appreciate the efforts of

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white liberals to convert other whites, but they bitterly resent the picture of themselves as helpless chips in the white game. They dislike it the more because, having little tradition of writing themselves, they are easily dominated by the skills of white writers and fall to imitating them — the more readily because publishers, too, are white.

A recent, aggressive example of how the Africans kick against the image of themselves in white books is given by a sophisticated South African writer, Ezekiel Mphahlele. In "The Non-European Character in South African Fiction" he undertakes to show how rarely white writers, even liberal writers, have really shown Africans as complete human beings. It is only among the older, more detached European writers — Kipling, Conrad or Forster — that he finds a serious understanding of non-European people. Well-meaning books like Paton's are the ones he attacks most bitterly for over-simplification.

WHAT, then, is the black answer to this? For most African writers in the continent write either in English or French, and it is within their power to right this wrong. Mphahlele himself — his autobiography *Down Second Avenue* will be published later this year — is one of the articulate black South Africans. His story, which is still another variation of the tribal child who comes to the big city, is both more complex and more believable than the guesses that Europeans have made. His childhood was more influenced by a broken home than by the impact of white supremacy; it was dominated, as are the lives of most country boys, by the certainties and wildnesses of nature. Books like his, or like Peter Abrahams' autobiography *Tell Freedom* — which describes his slum childhood in Johannesburg and his discovery of literature — make it clear that in much of their lives Africans are much more like Europeans than Europeans care to admit.

These two life stories, and others from territories further north (like the French African Camara Leye's *Dark Child*) are part of the birth, or rebirth, of African expression, liberating itself from white domination and groping towards that much-talked-of phenomenon, the "African Soul." As literature they remain incomplete, limited on the one hand by a closeness to European models, and on the other hand by an obsession with race, and an insistence on African rightness, which blurs the subtleties of white and black character. Only in a few books, for example, Abrahams' later novel about Ghana, *A Wreath for Udomo*, is there as yet any serious criticism of Africans by Africans.

While in South Africa there begins to appear a group of self-conscious, disciplined black writers, producing a Westernized literature adapted to the African terrain, West Africa is developing another kind of newness. African writers there are less bothered by race, less disciplined, and more excited by the opportunities of discovering language and twisting it to their own ends. Their fantasy has found its most picturesque expression in the stories by Amos Tutuola, whose *Palm Wine Drinkard* and its successors have blended tribal folktales with a bizarre use of English, in an enchanting world of "ghostesses," "reverend devils" or "deads." Even in less eccentric West African writers an Elizabethan freedom of language restores virility and freshness to old words.

Everywhere up and down Africa you can hear young intellectuals discussing their new Utopia. "Here are the dreams about the great things we yet will do," says a Johannesburg writer, Can Themba, introducing a forthcoming anthology of African writing, *Darkness and Light*: "the long dictionary words and the colorful regalia with which we swathe our dark bodies: that is us." Paradoxically, though, it is not so much in South or Central Africa — where the color bar segregates the African intellectuals, and forces them into nationalism — that the shape of the new Africa is most discussed, but in French Africa, where the educated Africans are free to assimilate with Europeans in Paris and elsewhere, and where, having assimilated, they are determined to be themselves. Only from outside Africa can you see Africa clearly; and the Africans in Paris, centering on a thoughtful and provocative periodical, *Presence Africaine*, have produced a succession of urgent discussions about the true nature of African culture, and how it must differ from the white man's.

Formidable French Africans like the politician-writer Leopold Senghor, for instance, believe that Africa, itself the means and the victim of the European Renaissance, is witnessing a renaissance of its own in which the analytical, materialistic standards of Western culture will be superseded by an intuitive and far more humane African culture. There, among other things, all art and beauty will be linked with a purpose: and he points to the fact that in African languages there is no word for beauty divorced from the object of it.

There is much confusion in these discussions. For instance, Richard Wright, the American Negro Parisian who has an oddly ambivalent attitude toward his African colleagues, sees the African renaissance as more rational, not more intuitive: "Thank you, Mr. White Man," he writes in an essay called "Tradition and Industrialisation," "for freeing me from the rot of my irrational traditions and customs, though you are still the victims of your own irrational traditions and customs." Each writer, no doubt, sees Africa in his own image. But on one point they are all united — that the marks of the new Africa must be compassion and humanity. "To the absurd utilitarian agitation of the whites," writes Sartre in an introduction to a book by the French African poet, Aime Cesaire, "the black offers the long authenticity of his suffering."

Old Fires

THE RETURN. By Herbert Mitgang. Simon and Schuster. 242 pp. $3.50.

Nelson Algren

MEN of our time whose most intense moments were lived out overseas in embattled hours, will be stirred by this novel, and a little troubled by it as well; as the past brought back is always troubling.

Joseph Borken, an American veteran of the North African and Sicilian campaigns, returns to Sicily, a decade later, as a geologist representing one of those international oil monstrosities that constitute nations in themselves.

His mission is to locate an ore peculiar to volcanic earth, his duty to avoid entanglement in Sicilian affairs.

Borken had, however, entangled himself in a Sicilian affair before Mussolini fell. Her name was Franca Florio and they had met in a bar where bouquets of many flowers mixed with bouquets of many wines.

He finds bar, bouquets and Franca too. She has been married, widowed and is again engaged; but the old fire between them rekindles. Borken hires both Franca's papa and her best fellow, an earnest boy named Eduardo, as guides in his search up the slopes of Mt. Etna.

Out of Eduardo's secret suspicion of a relationship between Franca and Borken, an inner conflict develops as they climb. While outwardly the ancestral conflict between peasants and aristocracy over ownership of the land also brews. Beneath their feet the mountain begins an anti-American rumbling.

NELSON ALGREN frequently reviews fiction for The Nation.

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The air becomes sulphurous, like the air of old battles being fought once more; returning to Borken his best and hardest time. Ultimately all three conflicts, of love, of land, of his search, are resolved for Borken.

The author, who himself served in the North African and Sicilian campaigns, must have soldiered honestly, for he writes like an honest soldier. His account of the inner workings of a great cartel is well informed, and his story of Franca and Borken is tender enough to remind many readers of Alfred Hayes's *The Girl on the Via Flaminia.*

The Irresponsibles

THE WAIST-HIGH CULTURE. By Thomas Griffith. Harper and Brothers. 275 pp. $4.

Robert Claiborne

IT would be unkind to suggest that this book is the most trenchant criticism of America which one can expect from a continuing member of the Luce organization. In fact, however, it is difficult to be either kind or fair to a book which is at once irritating and trivial.

The irritation stems partly from Griffith's heavy stylistic dependence on what he himself calls "third person imperative" — a style which can be sampled any week on the editorial page of *Life.* What makes his book trivial, however, is not his use of third person imperative but his obsession with first person plural. For Griffith, everything which is wrong or right with America is a matter of the way "we" behave. "We . . . acknowledge the necessity of advertising. . . . We respect the arts in principle — but reward the illustrator more than the artist, the jingle writer over the poet . . ." And in world affairs "We had not aspired to world leadership and responsibility; we had merely wanted to be rich and left alone. . . ."

Proletarian, politician and press-lord, all are swept up into this verbal catch-all which makes all of us responsible for everything and none of us very responsible for anything. It is tempting to echo the Churchill quotation which Griffith himself cites in another connection: "I refuse to be dealt with as part of a blob!"

One can sympathize with Griffith's distaste for those intellectuals who withdraw the hem of their garments from America's mass culture, saying in effect "This is none of I!" We are all, as he says, part of what is wrong with America; the currents of our culture flow through all of us. But some of us — editors of *Time*, for example — have a great deal more to do with directing those currents than others. To be sure, the notion that we are all equal partners in one big other-directed enterprise has received impressive rationalization (if not documentation) at the hands of David Riesman and his associates. But Griffith, who is within handshaking distance of the real seats of American power, should certainly know that some are a lot more equal than the rest.

Denunciations of the conformity, mediocrity and irresponsibility of American society are getting to be a dime a dozen. The common, conformist hallmark of many of these denunciations is the assumption that these unpleasant phenomena just happened, and that nothing very much can be done about them. It would have been nice if Griffith had gone a little further and tried to analyze the institutional roots of conformity and its role in the American power structure. Lacking such analysis, his portrayal of our waist-high culture remains skin deep.

ROBERT CLAIBORNE is a writer and magazine editor who has written previously for The Nation *on political and social topics.*

THEATRE

Harold Clurman

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS' *Sweet Bird of Youth* (Martin Beck) interested me more as a phenomenon than as a play. Its place in the author's development and its fascination for the audience strike me as more significant than its value as drama.

Williams is a romantic; one of the characteristics of the romantic is a pressing need to reveal himself. Though the play's narrative is realistic, the characters are frequently called upon to address the audience directly. Both in its content and its form one senses the author's urgent impulse to say everything he feels right out. Here I am, he seems to be telling us, naked and unabashed, and I am going to speak my piece. At the end of the play the central character turns to us and says, "I do not ask for your pity or even your understanding. I ask you only to recognize me in yourselves."

What is it we are asked to recognize in ourselves? That we are corrupted by our appetite for the flash and clamor of success, that we are driven to live debased existences by the constrictions and brutality which surround us, that

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the sound instincts of our youth are thus frustrated and turned to gall, and that we have an inordinate fear of age, for the passing of time makes us old before we mature.

There may be truth in this. More important is the manner in which this truth is conveyed. Chance Wayne is an average small-town boy born and reared somewhere on the Gulf Coast. At the age of seventeen he has an idyllic affair with a girl of fifteen. But because he is poor, the girl's father — political boss of the town — calls an abrupt halt to the romance. The boy goes to New York in the hope of becoming enough of a big shot as an actor to impress the folks back home. Because he has good looks but very little training, he gets nothing but jobs in the chorus of musicals. He also gives unbounded satisfaction to numerous women.

He is drafted for the Korean war and he suffers the awful fear that his splendid youth will be cut off by mutilation and his ambition thwarted by death. On his release from the Navy one of his jobs is that of masseur at a Florida beach resort. He earns money on the side as a gigolo. One of the women he encounters is a fading movie star in flight from impending failure. Her terror makes her take refuge in drugs and promiscuity. Chance Wayne brings her back to his home town. He clings to this woman — whose whore he becomes — because he plans to make her the key to a Hollywood career for himself. To make sure that she will live up to her end of the agreement, he uses a dictaphone to blackmail her — she has confessed to having smuggled the hasheesh they both smoke. In the meantime, he uses her Cadillac and takes her money to spend conspicuously so that his former girl, her father and the boyhood friends will be awed by his "position."

At some point before these latter events, Chance had resumed his affair with the girl who is his true love. Sometime during his career as a gigolo he had contracted a venereal disease and had unknowingly infected his beloved. Her father has her undergo an operation which renders her sterile. The girl bids the boy — still ignorant of what has happened — to leave town for good lest her father have him killed.

There are many more details portraying the girl's despair, the vile hypocrisy of her father, the maniacal vindictiveness of her brother, the savagery of the town's political gang. In the end the movie star, who for a moment had shown signs of compassion for the boy, abandons him because she has made a Hollywood comeback and can think of nobody but herself. By remaining in town after he has been repeatedly warned to get out, the boy virtually invites the castration with which he has been threatened.

I HAVE no categorical objection to this heap of horrors. I can believe that they occur in life, indeed that they have occurred. But the telling of this story is very close to lurid melodrama. What saves it from being just that is the fluently euphonious idiom and vivid grace of Williams' writing. Even more telling is Williams' ache and what might be called his ideology.

Is there any virtue at all in Chance Wayne? Williams names it. Chance has given *great pleasure*. He is consummately male, a wonderful lover. When he hears that a Negro in his town has been castrated for assaulting a white woman, Chance cries out, "I know what that is: it's sex envy" — which is surely the author's comment rather than the character speaking. Sex potency is held forth as a special order of merit bestowing amnesty for every misdeed.

Williams does not ask us to admire the boy, but the whole play suggests that he is sufficiently typical to induce us to share some kinship with him. A nonentity can be made central to a modern tragedy as is Clyde Griffith in Dreiser's book, but the novelist did this by weaving a web of environmental circumstance so complete in each detail that we are objectively convinced. Taken literally Chance Wayne is an atrocity. He is not a real person but a figment of Williams' commanding sentiment.

The simplification and distortion which mark the portrait of Chance are evident in the play's other characters as well — schematic types whose bareness is covered only by Williams' colorful verbiage. The movie actress is the best of them, for there is a grotesque humor about her — a kind of wry pity not far removed from contempt. The most crudely drawn figure is that of Boss Finley, a caricature of a Dixiecrat, a dirty dog beyond compare, more bogey than man. Indeed there is something about all the people in the play which seems calculated to scare us to death.

Much of what Williams has attempted to say here has been implied in some of his earlier plays, but they had more texture in characterization and reality. What we suspect in *Sweet Bird of Youth* is that Williams has become immobilized in his ideology; that it has not been refreshed either by any new experience or by mature thought. He has only become much bolder. The result is that we feel in this play an inverted sentimentality and a willful stress which produce

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more ugliness than lyricism or credence.

We know that a great part of what Williams feels about American life is valid: many novels and sociological studies in the past thirty-five years or more have helped us recognize its validity. So it is perhaps useful for Williams to cry havoc at theatre audiences still largely protected from the rumor of the real world. Scandal on Broadway may be beneficent. But I observe that the audience at *Sweet Bird* is entertained rather than stirred, piqued rather than sobered. It doesn't truly believe what it sees: it is simply enjoying a show with a kick in it. And this lack of shock may be attributed to something specious in the stage proceedings.

The production, directed by Elia Kazan, is admirably cast throughout: Paul Newman, Sidney Blackmer, Diana Hyland — all are good. Geraldine Page as the movie star creates an especially striking image — more on the comedy character side than on the pathetic. A sure and sharp showmanship is always manifest. The sets, though bare, are prettified by Jo Mielziner's sumptuous lighting.

I must leave Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (Ethel Barrymore) for next week. In the meantime let me note that I liked it very much.

ART

Maurice Grosser

THE National Institute of Arts and Letters is putting on display until April 4 the seventy works submitted by thirty-five American painters and sculptors invited as candidates for its annual grants. The Institute's exhibitions are quite different from other large group shows in that the committee in charge, which changes from year to year, is itself made up of painters and sculptors. The exhibiting artists are thus invited more for their individual professional excellence than as representatives of any particular artistic trend. And the annual shows, though they differ from year to year in make-up and quality, can be taken as a rough cross section of contemporary American art from a professional point of view. The present show, by a committee as yet unannounced, seems particularly interesting.

Perhaps most striking is the skillful and professionally respectable representational painting, so noticeably absent today from officially sponsored exhibitions. There is Leonid's *Normandy Cliffs*, with its tiny fishermen and beach perspective seen from the heights above; and John Koch's *The Movers*, a smoothly painted, almost "genre" picture, all in old gold and grays, of furniture being brought into a richly decorated flat. Leon Hartl's *Still Life with Red Fish* is a charmingly perverse alignment of objects in gray and mauves reminiscent of Bonnard. And Martin Jackson in his *Clock Shop* has invented an original and convincing way of painting glass, brass and glitter.

Among the fantastic and satiric paintings, the most impressive is James Kearns's large *Caesar*, a frightening caricature of a dictator crowned with laurels and spotlighted from above. The most touching is Gregorio Prestopino's *Pensive Girl*, a Negro child with shack and chickens, in a flat, almost comic-strip, style. The most unusual, and perhaps the most attractive, is Joe Lasker's *Rome*, a dream-world evocation with figures, wild perspective distances, tesselated pavement, wolf, and in the midst, a strange decorated cylindrical structure like a green porcelain fountain.

The painters who abstract from nature are equally well represented. There is a charming *Late Spring*, a riverside landscape by Frank Duncan in tender greens with elusive interlocking planes like those of Braque's middle Cubist style; and Dean Ellis' *Sentinel*, a patterned abstraction of a lighthouse at night with harbor lights, in rich dark color. Sidney Laufman's *Sanctuary* is a tight trellis of massive tree trunks, stylized like some of Derain's forest pictures but in a flatter plane. Sam Fisher has a *Still Life with Lemons*, the fruit indicated in what seems like the most brilliant Fauvist brushwork, but which is actually collage. While Karl Zerbe's *Tundra: Arctic Light — Occluded Sun*, with its sophisticated textures and lovely color, if it were not for the title, could pass for non-objective action painting.

As one can see from these examples, the show covers the complete range of today's painting techniques, from the desiccated tempera brushwork of Paul Cadmus and Robert Vickrey to the rich concretions of paint in Abstract Expressionist manner of Karl Zerbe and William Congdon. Surprisingly, however, there is not a single painting without image. Even *The Stream* of Walter Stein, which looks at first like an action painting, turns out on closer inspection a convincing view from somewhat above of a small brook running through leaves and grasses.

Among the sculptors, only Jose de Rivera with his spiral antennae in polished steel, and Bernard Rosenthal's constructions in welded metal plate can

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be called non-objective. The best and largest part of the other works is fanciful rather than strictly representational, light in structure and full of holes, built on a system of incurving surfaces, and with a marked predilection for terrifying insect and half-comic monster forms. Ezio Martinelli's *Jersey Devil,* for example, is an eight-foot travesty of an erect mosquito.

In all it seems to me a group show of great variety and exceptional quality. One wonders whether non-objective painting is peculiarly displeasing to this committee—there has been a great deal of non-objective work in the other annuals I have seen—or whether this absence is the beginning of a trend, of a reaction within the profession itself against the decorative side of contemporary art so systematically exploited in the official and extra-professional exhibits such as the recent Carnegie International.

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FILMS

Robert Hatch

WHAT with the title, the crass advertising and the fact that Fernandel is a renowned zany, the critics have felt required to insist rather didactically that *Forbidden Fruit* is a seriously intended picture with considerable relevance to human experience. It succeeds, not by any great originality of narrative or depth of penetration, but by a close, accurate and sympathetic observation of mundane behavior. A small-town doctor, trapped into a routine of bleak duty by his position and by the authority of an executive wife and a bitterly protective mother, stumbles into a blazing passage of sex with a cafe girl during a professional trip to the city. The doctor is no longer of an age to take such adventures lightly, and he attempts, quite irrationally, to establish it permanently. He adds the girl to his office, finds discreet lodgings for her in town and undertakes to live a double life in a community where he is as much on public view as the local war memorial. It is a pathetically impossible exploit — the device of a very innocent man — and it does not last long. But though it causes pain, it skirts tragedy and does rock the doctor's family out of gray tedium.

The film is derived from a novel by Simenon, who has a gift for making such domestic crises persuasive. But Fernandel's performance, directed by M. Verneuil, gives *Forbidden Fruit* its quality. He plays with no trace of buffoonery, but with the acuteness of gesture and expression which underlies the work of all good clowns. The figure he creates is a decent, useful and attractive, but considerably less than masterful man. The type is common enough in life, but in the theatre it is difficult to play so moderate a personality with any dramatic intensity. Fernandel succeeds by intelligent sympathy supported by a superbly trained talent.

You can also see Fernandel in his familiar antic style, playing with the Italian comic Toto in *The Law Is the Law,* a farce based on the confusion implicit in a town that straddles the French-Italian border. Fernandel is a French customs guard, Toto an Italian shopkeeper-smuggler, and the absurd convolutions of the plot provide the ground for their allied but quite individual virtuosities. Fernandel works in broad sweeps of character, Toto builds personality with neat, almost covert details. There have been complaints that the piece is too obviously a stage for mugging matches and burlesque dialogue, and it is true that the two comics spend considerable time in attempts to outclown each other. But if this means that the film is not great, it still produces frequent uproarious passages.

THE TWO-HEADED SPY is nonsense, pure, simple and entrancing. The English do this sort of foolishness with a straight-faced solemnity and respect for detail that is irresistible, and Jack Hawkins is the kind of ham who speaks volumes with an eyebrow. The picture keeps you sitting on the edge of your seat and laughing at yourself for doing so. Hawkins plays an English agent on Hitler's general staff (now just which of the infamous palace gang would *that* be?), his contact is an aged clockmaker, his aide reports to Himmler (Himmler, by the way, is admirably reconstructed by Alexander Knox) and as for that beautiful Italian girl who sings for the beastly Germans . . . Custom ought to stale this old machine, but it never quite does.

Something, however, has staled *The Journey* — pretentiousness, perhaps, combined with a desire to profit from the cold war without getting involved in controversy. This is a star wagon — Yul Brynner, Deborah Kerr, Robert Morley, Jason Robards, Jr., Kurt Kasznar — and, as often happens when such a cast is hired, each star is determined to shine with its own familiar light. This gives an unfocused effect — a rather crowded group of solo turns — but in the present case it wouldn't have helped much if Anatole Litvak had been able to persuade his actors to attend to the work in hand instead of addressing their publics. The story is solemn and undigested, the characters clash but they do not connect, and the whole thing rises to an evasion. It concerns a mixed company of travelers who are attempting to get across the border from Hungary to Austria during the time of the terror. Robards is a wounded freedom fighter traveling on a false British passport and aided by Miss Kerr, a British lady who loves him deeply. Morley is a busybody; Brynner, still exalted by his Karamazov act, commands a frontier garrison and is determined to show his enforced guests that Russian officers have plenty of heart. This he does by drinking plenty of vodka, bullying a gypsy orchestra, showing affection for his horse, making absurd statements about his rapport with Hungarians and forcing his attentions on Miss Kerr. He is a picturesque throwback to the army of Boris Godunov, that being as close to Soviet reality as Hollywood cares to approach.

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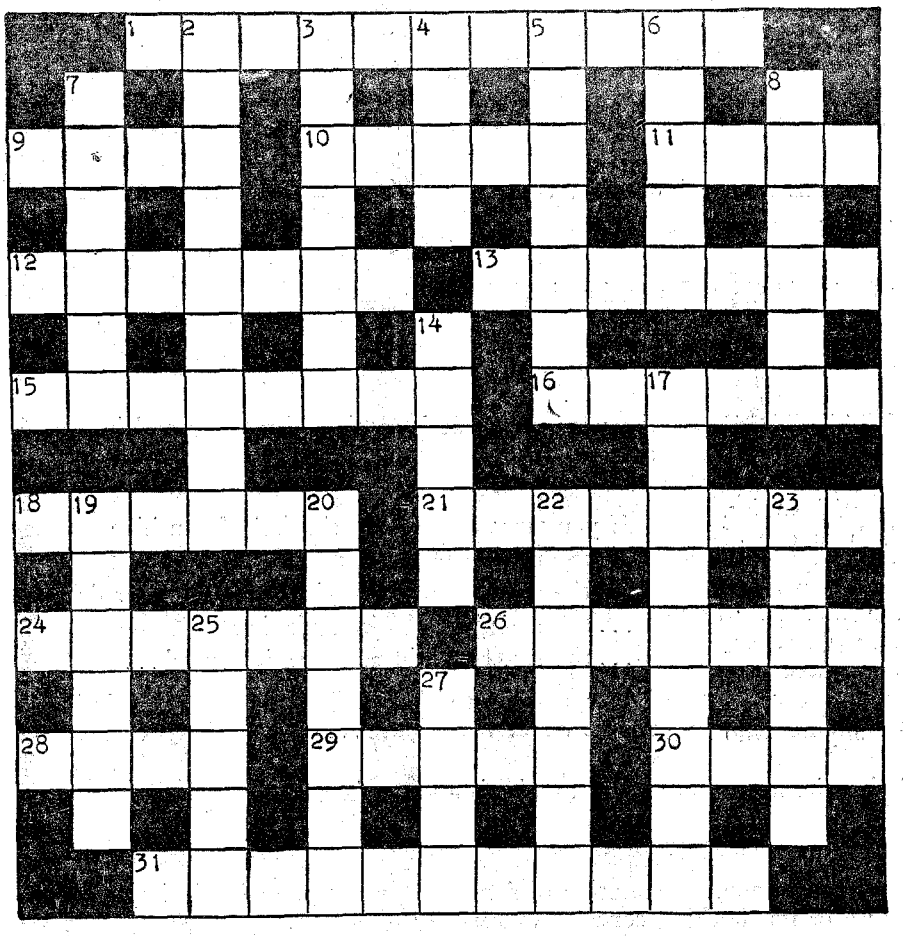
Crossword Puzzle No. 813

By FRANK W. LEWIS



1 Certainly not the 30 of 9 across. (3, 8)
9, 28, 8 down and 30 Snow-white could identify it. (4, 3, 1, 6, 4)
10 Green stuff around in the change of green stuff? (5)
11 30 across. (4)
12 Grows up in the same rut, evidently. (7)
13 Hounds a stupid person into wagers! (7)
15 Was the eagle trying to speed it down in the dumps? (8)
16 Such an awkward collection of rubble is not likely to produce excellent tar. (6)
18 A girl with an extreme case of the shakes is likely to be rather acid! (6)
21 Where one hopes the side on top is not away? (4, 4)
24 Sounds somewhat like Walton Gap. (7)
26 Just a second type of beverage during this month? (7)
28 See 9 across
29 This might serve as a broken temporary peace agreement. (5)
30 See 9 across
31 You might find Rose amusing, but not very bright. (11)

DOWN:

2 If your partner's feet have toeless pumps on them, you'd better dance this way! (2, 4, 3)
3 Hide in a brief description of where Ierapetra is located. (7)
4 Leave off about the middle of 1. (4)
5 Where the horse might be set up. (7)
6 Exploiters of a mess Charlotte's qualifier made? (5)
7 Was such a good front put up by Walton with the help of Sitwell? (6)
8 See 9 across
14 The Golden Bough states they were originally linked with the idea of fertility in nature. (5)
17 A trifle 21 without a place to stay! (9)
19 Orwell's farm. (6)
20 Where a drink seems to sort of happen with more than one article. (7)
22 Brave spirit? (7)
23 Little things of an extremely shortened 19, when I'm headed wrong.
25 Can't part of Shakespeare's language without apostrophe? (5)
27 Part of the brass to touch up? (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 812

ACROSS: 1 Confederation; 10 Withe; 11 Supersede; 12 Laundered; 13 Dates; 14 Powder monkey; 19 Scarlet fever; 22 Aspic; 24 Somewhere; 25 Cabriolet; 26 Eagle; 27 Reinforcement. DOWN: 2 Output; 3 Field goal; 4 Discredit; 5 Roped; 6 Tired; 7 Overtake; 8 Swell; 9 Jerseys; 15 and 21 Rheumatic fever; 16 Overwhelm; 17 Askance; 18 Palpable; 20 Bergen; 23 Cairn; 24 Soldo.

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